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SUMMARY

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The USSR has intensified its interference with foreign fishing operations in Soviet coastal waters and given other indications that it is considering measures to extend its control and strengthen its legal position with respect to the Soviet ocean periphery. In spite of the possibility that these Soviet actions might provoke retaliatory measures by other countries, which would adversely affect Soviet overseas interests to some extent, the USSR probably considers that these potential disadvantages would be far outweighed by the following direct advantages: (a) increased protection against attack on Soviet coastal areas; (b) prevention of foreign observation of Soviet naval and military activity; (c) reservation of valuable fishing grounds for exclusive Soviet use; (d) disruption of food supplies of other leading fishing nations; and (e) establishment of a strong Soviet position based on consistent practice before the UN program to codify international law proceeds too far. Further Soviet action to exclude foreign vessels from Soviet coastal areas or at least to limit severely their activity may take one or more of the following forms: (a) arbitrary extension of the zone of "territorial waters" by declaration or definition; (b) establishment of a zone of "contiguous waters" subject to stringent Soviet controls; (c) claim to special rights to interfere with navigation and fishing in exploitation of the resources of the "continental shelf"; or (d) maintenance of extensive "defense" zones. Extension of Soviet sovereignty or jurisdiction over its offshore waters would adversely affect US interests by: (a) weakening US efforts to block extensions of the 3-mile limit, which permits maximum

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freedom of circulation for US merchant and naval vessels in both peace and war, as well as for US fishing vessels; (b) interfering with fishing operations, thus damaging the economies of nations which are friendly to and receive economic aid from the US; (c) prejudicing the important codification activity of the UN; (d) establishing precedents for arbitrary and unilateral restrictive action by other countries; and (e) reducing Western opportunities for observing Soviet military and naval activity along the Soviet periphery.

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